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Williams, Megan K.

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Robert S. Sturges, ed. *Law and Sovereignty in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*.

Arizona Studies in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance 28. Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2011. xviii + 302 pp. index. append. illus. €70. ISBN: 978-2-503-53309-4.

This volume brings together thirteen revised and expanded papers from the Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies' 2008 conference. In exploring the many and varied interpenetrations of premodern sovereignty and law, the papers remind us that sovereignty, for medieval and early modern European commentators, was conceived primarily in juridical terms.

Among the volume's unifying themes is the medieval and early modern conviction that unrestrained exercise of royal prerogative, while lawful, could nonetheless prove pernicious. Though explicitly engaging neither sovereignty nor law, Albert Classen's essay on the Middle High German romance *Tristan* argues that the protagonist's recklessness as ruler prefigures his later tragedy. Reckless royals risked regicide: Harald Braun's well-grounded and articulate essay rereads Spanish humanist Juan de Mariana's infamous 1599 treatise *De rege* as expounding

maxims of political prudence that princes who promoted narrowly legalist notions of absolute royal power ignored at their peril. Mariana's Spanish readers would also have recalled the 1520–21 Comuneros uprising, which Aurelio Espinosa interprets as a statement of popular sovereignty arising from, rather than resulting in, Habsburg absolutism. Equally concerned with misrule, Erika Hess highlights how the (lawful) royal revocation of "natural" female inheritance laws resulted in "unnatural" cross-dressing in the thirteenth-century French *Roman de Silence*. Hess sees the romance reflecting profound shifts in late medieval French inheritance practices.

Seeking, by contrast, to demonstrate how popular romance traditions influenced contemporary legal culture, Lee Manion shows that English monarchs cited legendary forebear King Arthur in claiming sovereignty over Scotland. He depicts the ceremonies by which Scottish rulers acknowledged Arthur's sovereignty in two fifteenth-century English romances and suggests such romances as alternative sites to imagine or contest sovereign claims. Similarly, Adrienne Williams Boyarin demonstrates the popularity of late medieval English legends depicting the Virgin as a legal intercessor, tenuously suggesting that such juridically-savvy representations may have influenced the legal characterization of contemporary women, including Jewish businesswomen.

Both Boyarin and Manion note the pervasive incorporation of written legal documents into English medieval literature. Closely reading the interplay of oral and written testimony in a tenth-century legal document, Andrew Rabin traces how Anglo-Saxon subjects defined, negotiated, and inscribed sovereign juridical authority. Similarly, arguing in the conference's plenary address that the infamous Chaucer rape case involved two distinct quitclaims, Richard Firth Green opens avenues for future research by affirming quitclaims' evidentiary value and far-from-formulaic language. Retha Warnicke, however, rightly cautions that for early modern diplomatic dispatches, too often accepted uncritically as valid political testimony, close reading is insufficient. Contextualizing the Spanish ambassador's 1583 dispatches from England, she reveals their manifold distortions, inaccuracies, and unsubstantiated rumors as more informative of contemporary anxieties than events.

The Anglo-Scots tensions such dispatches reported necessitated a widely-distributed elegaic literature upon Elizabeth I's death in 1603 and succession by Scottish nephew James. As Catherine Loomis neatly shows, this literature's imagery of natural succession — for example, seasonal change — sought to persuade listeners of James's inevitability and legitimacy. That Elizabeth's sovereignty was challenged at home as well as abroad prompted Richard Hooker to defend her unified civil and ecclesiastical jurisdiction in his 1590s *Lawes of Ecclesiasticall Politie*. Though Hooker's law and theology are often considered irreconcilable, Torrance Kirby establishes that Hooker's division of eternal law into two species preserved the transcendent, sovereign deity necessary to Calvinist ecclesiology.

Building a cathedral to house this deity became a concrete expression of extended popular sovereignty and civic solidarity in fifteenth-century Milan. Elegantly challenging traditional assessments of Milanese politics, Martina

Saltimacchia demonstrates wide popular involvement — from an elected lay board to moving individual donations — in constructing the Duomo. Less visible than the Duomo but more risible is the French farce *The Farce*'s juridical contestation of “sovereignty” over flatulence. Sharon King posits her neatly-rhymed translation, performed at the conference, as parodying an acrimonious 1470s dispute over the French annexation of Provence and Anjou. Its insistence, however, on the unity of marital property — and the antiquity of “He who smelt it, dealt it” (“Qui premier l’a sentu, l’a faict,” 100) — seems equally likely to entertain students of medieval marriage laws.

Though editor Robert Sturges organizes the volume thematically around “theories,” “fictions,” “contestations,” and gendered “applications,” the groupings provide little interactive insight. The contributions are situated primarily within the national frameworks of traditional historiography; perspectives on overseas encounters could have enriched the discussion. This collection will thus be of interest chiefly for its individual contributions and for its affirmation of growing interdisciplinary interest in the premodern entanglements of law and sovereignty.

MEGAN K. WILLIAMS  
University of Groningen